CBSE 7201T

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Wiki Assignment #1- Define “Action Research” and discuss a current educational issue/possible research topic that is of interest to “**you**.” Refer to the following criteria when discussing each topic:

* Defining the Problem – discuss the need for intervention.
* Is it researchable?
* Prior Research? Name at least two sources.
  + Pros and Cons: Name at least two sources.
  + Current Instructional Strategies? Name at least two sources.
  + Practitioners/Theorists? Name at least two sources.

What is your proposed intervention? (Independent Variable). Name at least one source.

* How will you define (construct) and measure your intervention? (Dependent Variable)

According to Stephen M. Corey, “Action Research” in education is defined as research undertaken by practitioners so that they may improve their practices. Teachers and administrators use the scientific method to try and solve current educational issues. This would include gathering data, analyzing the findings, as well as implementing the solutions (if possible) to the issue at hand.

A current educational issue and possible research topic that is of interest to me is the use of technology in the classroom. I would like to know if the use of technology in the classroom helps or hurts our students. Initially, my thoughts were entirely in favor of the use of technology such as smart boards, computers, I-pads, and e-readers. However, I have seen many students who get distracted by these modern technologies. Some of the students I’ve taught as a substitute teacher use computer time to get away with not completing classwork.

In addition, the use of smartphones and texting has distorted the way in which students write. Some of the students I’ve encountered will use texting abbreviations like “OMW(On My Way)” in their school papers instead of writing out the words. Students are also too dependent on “Google” as an information source, when, in fact, it is not always reliable or scholarly. My action research project would be on the use of technology in the classroom and whether or not it is more helpful or harmful to our students. With the increased use of technology in the classroom, educators need an intervention into its appropriate purposes.

I believe the topic of technology in the classroom is definitely researchable. This is a current educational issue. Technologies will continue to advance and be incorporated into the classrooms. There has been prior research on this topic. According to a study on the impact of technology on fourth grade science students in Japan and the USA, computer use increased achievement in science. However, some students played computer games, which did not help achievement in science. In another study, researchers found that the use of e-readers in the elementary schools had no significant effect on the reader’s accuracy.

Prior research has shown that there are both pros and cons to the use of technology in the classroom. A disadvantage, for example, was found by Shirley Lefever-Davis and Cathy Pearman. They conducted a study into how CD-ROM storybooks influence reading behaviors. They found that CD-ROMS have “the potential to promote passivity, putting readers into a sort of "spectator stance" in which they let the computer do the "work" of reading rather than becoming actively engaged in the reading process.” An advantage of the use of technology in classrooms, on the other hand, was found in a study of two technology-enriched inclusion classrooms that promote learning for students with learning disabilities. This study, by Sylvia Elisabeth Asplund, suggested that the students benefited from the use of technology in the areas of content vocabulary and organization of their ideas.

Currently, many school districts throughout the country are implementing the use of technology into their instructional strategies. According to an article in the Journal of Staff Development, a Colorado school district felt that learning about technology should be “embedded within sound instructional practices”. That same school district developed a two year staff development program to allow teachers to bring technology into the classroom. In author William N. Bender’s book, Project-Based Learning: Differentiating Instruction for the 21st Century, he describes “project-based-learning (PBL).” According to Bender, PBL is an important instructional practice in which students complete projects by incorporating technology such as wikis and webquests into their work. Bender felt that the use of technology fosters learning.

It can be said that educational theorists from years past also support the use of technology in the classrooms. For example, Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences suggests that children learn in different ways. For the visual learner, interactive multimedia such as a smart board may very well be a great learning tool. In addition, John Dewey believed that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum. That being said, the use of technology in the classroom should certainly allow students to interact with their curriculum.

My proposed intervention is to test whether technology integration hurts or helps student learning. I would do this by implementing smart boards and laptops into a classroom that has not used them before (independent variable). I would like to compare the successful completion of a social studies unit between the new technology rich classroom and one without technology assistance. I would assess the impact of the technology on the classroom by comparing unit completion test scores among the two classes (dependent variable).

References

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